Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and forty-second plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 16 February 2018, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha.....(Sri Lanka)

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The President: I call to order the 1,442nd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. As we begin, let me wish all our colleagues celebrating new year from China, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam the very best in the new year. We hope that the new year augurs well for all of us here in the Conference on Disarmament as well. Let us proceed.

Following the formal and informal plenary meetings of Wednesday afternoon, I have further modified the text of the draft decision contained in document CD/WP.605/Rev.1. You will find these modifications in document CD/WP.605/Rev.2, which is available in the room. An advance copy of this revised document was also circulated on Wednesday evening to all delegations by the Conference secretariat. We did this so that there would be ample time for delegations to consult their capitals, as we took a considered decision that we would not meet yesterday and that we would meet today to try to adopt this decision.

Once more, I have listened to all comments and tried to incorporate them as sincerely as possible, taking account of all the comments made. We have done this in full transparency. I have spoken to some of the delegations that had specific concerns. I wanted to understand where those concerns come from, what dangers they anticipate when they make these points and to be sensitive to these difficulties. I have tried to explain to them why I have done what I have done and I hope that today we are meeting with a very clear understanding of where each of us is coming from.

There is no doubt that no document is perfect, but at least the Sri Lankan presidency cannot be blamed for the manner in which it has tried to improve this document. If you go back and look, there was a document before the one submitted to you, on which, as you know, we consulted with many delegations. There was an initial document and documents CD/WP.605/Rev.1 and Rev.2 have been issued. If you look at the progression of these documents, you will very clearly see that we have carefully taken on board the concerns that delegations had, in order to try and resolve issues which were of prime concern to delegations. If they had remained, they could have not only caused difficulties for them but also affected long-held positions and the long-term principles of this body.

So I want to be very clear that we have not worried about how much time we took or the efforts made and I am very thankful to all delegates at this Conference who have gone along with the Chair, not complained about having to come in spite of the Chinese New Year and all the other activities which have been going on. I think there is a lovely spirit to be seen, because we must overcome this sense that we are not serious. Like I said at the very outset, we have been working, but we must also show that things work. It is in that spirit that we have moved from the initial draft of the document to documents CD/WP.605/Rev.1 and Rev.2. I believe that this draft seeks to strike the delicate balance between the different positions; but, as I have always done, I intend to listen to your views on this revised draft decision tabled for consideration by the Conference now before we proceed to move to adoption.

Does anyone want to take the floor? The Ambassador of the United States, please.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I have just a very quick question. The latest version that I received this morning is from 14 February, it is document CD/WP.605/Rev.2. I just want to make sure that there is no difference between document CD/WP.605/Rev.2 of 14 February 2018 and the version of the document of 15 February. I just want to make sure there were not any changes at all.

The President: Clarify that, please.

Ms. Mercogliano (Acting Secretary of the Conference): There is no difference. The one from the previous day was the advance version that we sent out. The moment it is submitted for processing to conference management it has to have the date of the day that it is submitted. So it is absolutely the real one. The real one is the one without the watermark "Advance version" and the two versions are exactly the same.

The President: Thank you.

The delegation of the Russian Federation, please, followed by the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, we fully endorse your summing-up of the process involved in reaching agreement on the draft decision that you are presenting for adoption today. Indeed, as a result of the joint efforts made, a true compromise document has emerged. While it cannot, of course, reflect all the different national perspectives, it constitutes a solid basis for adopting the decision.

The President: I thank the delegation of Russia. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, since this is the first time that I am taking the floor during your presidency, let me congratulate you on your assumption as the President of the Conference and let me assure you of our full cooperation during your presidency.

While I have the floor, I would like to thank you for all the efforts you and your team have made for the draft decision that you have provided. We know how much work you have done and are appreciative of all the work you have carried out for this draft decision.

In all circumstances, we have mentioned that what we are looking for in this Conference is a balanced and a comprehensive programme of work. Towards that aim, Iran is committed to working with all colleagues so that we can ensure that a balanced and comprehensive programme of work is adopted during 2018. Having said that, Mr. President, we see that your text is a good basis for a decision that might be taken towards helping the adoption of the programme of work. For that reason, we think that a certain adjustment is needed to your text so that it reflects the concerns that we have enumerated on other occasions.

One of the concerns which we have mentioned is that this decision which is going to be taken should be limited to 2018. So we should try to see how much this text would help us move forward. We should not prejudge the outcome of the deliberations for 2019. So, in full conformity with the practice that we have adopted, we would like to see operative paragraph 6 readjusted in accordance with the language that we have provided, or else deleted — the whole paragraph. We do not need such a paragraph.

Another issue which is very important is that, since this is the first time that you are going to deal with all these items on an equal footing, and we do not know how effectively the subsidiary bodies will work, at this juncture, it is very important, in our view, that we meet in informal meetings based on the rules of procedure. They clearly specify under rule 24 that the subsidiary bodies should meet informally unless the Conference decides otherwise. For that reason, we would like to see the language in operative paragraph 3 changed to reflect that concern.

Another point is about the language which says "cognizant of the complex nature of the issues under its purview, the wide range of perspectives thereon, including on the levels of maturity of their consideration". We know that, in the subsidiary bodies, one issue might be mature and people might judge that it is mature enough to be negotiated or not; but what we need to highlight is that progress on each and every item is essential to achieve a balanced programme of work, which is the aim of the whole exercise in this Conference. So, for that reason, we should provide language highlighting how important it is that all of us engage on each and every item and not try to highlight one item while compromising the other items. Because, in the past, sometimes it has happened that one item has become much more of a priority in certain quarters and compromised the others. So we should highlight that issue as well.

These are the major proposals that we provide for your delegation. I hope that in the proceedings of this Conference we will be able to achieve consensus based on the inclusive and participatory approach that we are going to take. To that end, Iran is fully engaged to work with you during this exercise, in particular before the expiry of your presidency.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Iran for his statement and the suggestions which he has made. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by conveying to everyone my best wishes on the occasion of Chinese New Year and I hope that the spirit of empathy and tolerance that the year of the dog brings will enable us to move forward on the adoption of this draft resolution. I think we have made a lot of progress.

We began our work without much hope of being able to change the dynamic within the Conference, but I think we now have a text that can lead us to a new stage of our work and my delegation really appreciates that. We welcome the new version of the text, which we have considered in detail. While we welcome the fact that some of the changes my delegation requested have been included, we see that the document is still not the balanced text we need in order to take the next step. Therefore, please allow me to suggest a few amendments that we consider to be fundamental to reaching the adoption stage. I would like to explain them, so I asked the secretariat to distribute a copy of the draft decision containing our amendments to make it easier to follow. I will wait a minute for the amendments to be distributed before I go on to explain them.

The President: Just to clarify, let me say that what is being distributed has the watermark. This was the advance copy circulated on 14 February. The content remains the same except for the track changes in red. What you see in this document, with the watermark and without the red track changes, is the same as what is there on the table officially called document CD/WP.605/Rev.2. Excellency, please continue.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you for that clarification, Mr. President. In preambular paragraph 10 of the document, we request that the words "and negotiations" be deleted, for the reasons my delegation outlined at the previous meeting when we requested the deletion of those same words from preambular paragraph 4. What we would like is for there to be no doubt, given the Conference's mandate, that substantive work and negotiations are one and the same thing. In operative paragraph 1, we are asking for the deletion of "inter alia", because it means "among other things", which would imply that nothing would be off-limits and that the subsidiary bodies could do whatever they pleased — including repeating the discussions we have already had in previous years — and still be discharging their mandates. Mexico is not prepared to grant unconditional mandates to the subsidiary bodies. Firstly, because of the risk that the work they are supposed to carry out will become less focused. Secondly, because this sentence explicitly allows them to replicate the work done by the working group on the way ahead or other previous work, which, in my delegation's opinion, did not advance our objective of moving on to negotiations. We are concerned that "inter alia" opens the door to doing even less than what is envisaged in paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c), which in our view are rather modest goals, in the light of the Conference's negotiation mandate.

In operative paragraph 1 (b), we ask that the word "gradually" be deleted. We believe that it is neither necessary nor useful to qualify the phrase "broadening areas of agreement". We believe that using this word could hamper progress by implying that areas of agreement can be broadened only in a gradual manner. Moreover, the deletion of the adverb has no effect on the mandate described in subparagraph (b): if the goal is to broaden areas of agreement, it is irrelevant whether the process is gradual or not. We would also like to reiterate the importance of including an additional operative paragraph 5 bis, which I will not read out, as you all have the text in front of you. If the main argument for setting up subsidiary bodies is the belief that it is not possible to adopt a programme of work with a negotiation mandate, then we do not see how there could be opposition to the inclusion of this paragraph. The draft decision currently does not envisage the possibility that a programme of work will be adopted, or rather what would happen if one were adopted. If this provision on the potential adoption of a programme of work with a negotiation mandate is not included, the subsidiary bodies would become a direct impediment to implementation of the programme of work, as it is doubtful that there would be sufficient capacity to carry out both exercises concurrently. In addition, in this scenario, the work of the subsidiary bodies would become redundant, given that the Conference would once again be in a position to conduct negotiations. As pointed out earlier, in order to address this concern, my delegation suggested the addition of this paragraph using language in line with what was

agreed in the decision contained in document CD/2090, precisely because that would make its inclusion easier.

Regarding my delegation's request to delete operative paragraph 6, despite the fact that it has been amended, we still have reservations about the paragraph being kept. However, since we are doing our best to be flexible, we could accept keeping the paragraph in its current form if what we put forward as paragraph 5 bis is included. Inasmuch as this draft decision was presented as a serious attempt to move forward in the absence of a programme of work with a negotiation mandate, we do not believe there should be any difficulty in addressing our concerns, since the amendments were submitted in a constructive spirit, with arguments to back them up, and are, in our opinion, reasonable. We believe that the amendments clarify the objectives of this exercise and allow some leeway for improving the functioning of the subsidiary bodies within the Conference's mandate and rules of procedure.

I wish to reiterate that, notwithstanding our own doubts about the usefulness of establishing subsidiary bodies for the purposes cited in the draft decision, we note that a number of delegations see value in this approach. I would therefore like to assure you that, despite my delegation's scepticism, if we manage to make progress on the adoption of this text and our concerns are taken into account, Mexico will not stand in the way of adopting this draft. Should it be adopted, we will be constructive participants in the work of the subsidiary bodies, as they represent a chance for the Conference to demonstrate its relevance. We are fully at your disposal and will do our utmost to be flexible.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for her statement and for making proposals. Excellency, if I may say, the amendments are clear. I would just like to say that our understanding when putting this word "inter alia" was not to lose the three things, or not to allow anyone not to go down the road covered in operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c); but I take it that your reading of "inter alia" is that it can be done away with. I am not a native English speaker, so just let us be clear on what exactly the issue with "inter alia" is, if you would be so kind as to clarify what your understanding of it is. Because to me it means "among other issues"; it does not preclude other things. You seem to fear that we could end up leaving out the things listed in operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c) and do other things. I would appreciate it if you could just clarify that for the Conference, please.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It seems to us that the term "inter alia" creates a lot of ambiguity with regard to the mandate of the working groups and is so broad that it allows them to do whatever they please, without necessarily focusing on the remit set forth in paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c). I believe the Conference has engaged in work in the past, in particular the working group on the way ahead and other groups, where delegations may well have been kept busy but the focus on the specific expectations was lost. For this reason, in our view, by deleting "inter alia" we are lending greater focus to the work and requesting that the subsidiary bodies concentrate on the objectives set out in paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c). That is why we think that taking out the phrase will make the text better and clearer — less ambiguous and more results-oriented.

The President: Thank you, so I take it that your problem is not with operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c), but that that can be ducked in a scenario, as you said. Thank you for clarifying that and I think that it is useful to understand that. I do not know, there may be other readings of the term, but it is useful to have that clarified. I now give the floor to the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Nikolaichik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the work you have done and for the flexibility and inclusivity you have shown.

My delegation understands very well that we could spend a long time arguing about wording, trying to "improve" the document, but, before doing this, we, as a Conference, should provide honest answers to a range of questions.

First, can we begin discussions without agreement on our understanding of the subject matter, aims and scope of any future legal or other document?

Secondly, can we allow ourselves to lose up to two months at the beginning of every year agreeing on the technical parameters of work, instead of ensuring continuity and taking key decisions in the first days of a new session?

Lastly, and most importantly, do we really want to move towards substantive work?

My delegation has answered these questions for itself.

We think that the document that has been submitted is balanced and in line with the rules of procedure and it establishes the conditions for the Conference's return to substantive work. We would therefore like to support the draft decision.

The President: I thank the delegation of Belarus for reminding us what we are here for. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I am sorry I have to take the floor. When I entered the room this morning, I was certainly prepared to accept your draft decision as written. I know that you put in a number of hours of consultations to try to get us to a point where we could reach agreement on a document here. It is unfortunate that these amendments have come forward at this eleventh hour. My delegation is not willing to accept the amendments that have been put forward by the representatives of Iran and Mexico. We are prepared to take action on the draft you put forward. However, if indeed this document is going to be open for amendments, I would like to propose an amendment from the United States delegation. I would take you to operative paragraph 1 (c) that begins with "consider effective measures". My edit will be included as I read the following: "consider effective measures, including legal and other instruments for negotiations". So, again, the sentence would read: "Consider effective measures, including legal and other instruments for negotiations."

Mr. President, I am prepared not to request that you move forward with these proposed edits, if indeed we are going to take action on your draft as written; but if, as I said, you are going to open the text up for amendments, I would like to put those amendments on record.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States. I give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President, and Happy Chinese New Year to everyone in the room. I would like to echo my Russian and Belarusian colleagues' comments about this providing a solid foundation. Australia is ready to accept the draft decision as it is. I do worry that we are overthinking this and that we need to keep our eye on the big picture and why we are actually doing this — to get us closer to a programme of work and to get us closer to negotiations. I think the decision clearly limits us to 2018 but provides an innovative mechanism if we decide that is the way to go ahead.

I think there is a structural issue with the Conference on Disarmament: we try and squeeze all of our work into one year; we have to spend a lot of that time kind of mulling over what we are going to do and then finalizing reports at the end. I think we need to be realistic: disarmament actually takes a really long time; it is really complex. So we need to have as much time as we can to talk about substance and, if we need to build on that over the years, then I think that is the way it is. The expression I would use is that we need to approach this in terms of giving ourselves maximum manoeuvring room for progress within the rules of procedure. The context is that this Conference has been unable to negotiate for 20 years. I think we need to keep that in mind when we approach this decision. Moreover, we need to approach it with goodwill and an element of trust that this is a bona fide, goodwill effort and that we all have the same objective in mind.

The President: I thank the delegation of Australia for that comment. The Ambassador of the Netherlands, followed by the Ambassadors of India and Spain.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, thank you very much for all your efforts in making new proposals and doing your best to get us to a decision. There was a very good spirit on Wednesday and I think many of us were close to — maybe we could even have finalized the text and there was broad consensus on the way ahead. You did a second revision, listening very carefully to one or two countries which made suggestions.

To be honest, I am not so happy with the second revision. I could agree very much with the first revision or even the first text. We have to be very careful. We are going down a slippery slope, where we are losing the sense of the consensus and balance in the text.

I fully agree with Belarus that the main idea of this is the subsidiary bodies and, as Australia said, we have to give this a chance. There is a good spirit in this room that we should give these groups a chance. There is also a time element: we do not have much time any more this year to really work in these subsidiary bodies. We can talk about technicalities or procedures, but that would only take us away from the substance and what we have to deal with.

So I am not very much in favour of the new amendments which have been put forward and which put the text out of balance. I am in line with those who spoke before me from Australia, Russia, the United States and Belarus. Let us focus on this text as we have it, although maybe there are a few things to look at. I listened carefully to what the representative of Mexico said and to your questions, Mr. President. If there is anxiety about the wording, then maybe we can look at a word and change the text a little bit, but not whole new operative paragraphs. I think that we would lose the sense of the balance of the text. I think we are nearly there. Let us focus on the text as you have it and give it a try.

The main thing here is the subsidiary bodies. They will work on substantive work and this will be the first time in 20 years, except for the working group on the way ahead. There we did some substantive work, but in the end we could not agree on it, although there was good substantive work done. If we can carry this forward with your idea, I think that would be real progress and I hope that today we can finalize this. Thank you again for all the effort you have put into this.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Netherlands. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, thank you to you and your team for working so hard on behalf of all of us and thank you for the revised version of the draft decision. My delegation was prepared to go along with the previous versions in a spirit of flexibility and compromise. You have been very attentive, you have listened carefully to all of us and you have done your utmost to take on board some concerns that were raised at a relatively late stage in our work and many of which my delegation had difficulties with. So, in a spirit of compromise, we are in a position to support your draft decision as it is, but if we start to open it up at this stage, at this very late stage, we will face difficulties. I think if we look carefully at the specific proposals that have been made today, my sense is that the concerns which underlie those proposals are already taken care of.

Now I want to go into this in some detail. For example, our colleague from Mexico suggested that we delete the reference to negotiations in the preambular part. There was a previous reference to substantive work and negotiations and I think you took into account the Mexican delegation's concern and you deleted that reference to negotiations. This reference is very different from that previous reference. In fact, this goes in the same direction as the Mexican delegation's reasoning that we need to have subsequent decisions, perhaps on a programme of work with a negotiating mandate. This is something that is in the Mexican delegation's proposal for operative paragraph 5 bis. So, here, when we are talking about further decisions, we are not prejudicing anyone's position on what is substantive work, what is included in substantive work, what is excluded from substantive work. So I think that you have already taken on board this concern.

Now on this other aspect of "levels of maturity", I think that what you put in your draft is a very carefully worded formulation that takes into account different views, including the view of our colleague from Iran that we do not want a situation in which we artificially ascribe a high level of maturity to one thing or the other. So you see clearly that there are a wide range of perspectives thereon. You acknowledged that we have different views on this issue of maturity and, frankly, you address it again in the operative part when you set up five subsidiary bodies in an equal manner. So there is an official tinkering with the level of maturity there and with the prioritization there. Once again, you have listened to the substantive concern that underlies this suggestion.

Now coming to this issue of "inter alia", like you Mr. President, I am also not a native English speaker, but I think my understanding of "inter alia" is that it is not that of a ceiling, it is that of a floor. Thus the Mexican delegation's concern that somehow we will not do what is there in operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c) but do even less than we did last year — that is certainly not our understanding of this. In fact, you are giving us a solid level on which to build. I know that our Mexican colleague has just left the room, but her able deputy is here and I want to continue with this suggestion about "gradually". Now, initially, there was a reference to progressive here — "progressively broadening areas of agreement" — and this was not meant to recall anything else. You took on board the concern that was expressed in the room and you changed it to "gradually". Now whether we say gradually, incrementally or if we do not say anything at all, the idea remains that we will have to build on where we are and go from there and keep working in an incremental manner.

Now, coming to the next edit that has been made, which is on this aspect of formal versus informal, I think that you took on board the concern that was expressed by many, including the United Kingdom delegation, that there seemed to be somewhat of a contradiction with the rules of procedure in your first version of the text, not even document CD/WP.605/Rev.1 — the first one. So you changed it to make sure that we stay within the bounds of the rules of procedure and that the subsidiary bodies are to work in accordance with rule 24, which is clear. What is now being suggested is to make it more clear. I think, with the reference to rule 24, my delegation certainly — and we share the same substantive concern that others have -- would be comfortable.

Concerning the reference in operative paragraph 5 bis, this is where my delegation has the most difficulty with the amendments that have been suggested. There is an inherent contradiction in this document if we are to consider this as part of the overall structure. Now the rules of procedure are there and rule 24 is there. You have tried to address the concern that was expressed right at the outset when you first circulated the working paper by bringing in a new preambular paragraph, where you make reference to the responsibilities entrusted to the President, "in particular rule 29 for drawing up the programme of work of the Conference". The placement that you have made of that particular paragraph alongside the reference to "further decisions that may be taken" clearly shows that what we are doing now is the best possible in the circumstances and that further decisions could be taken. Whether we stick to the notion that has developed in the last few years of a programme of work with negotiating mandates — not just one, maybe more — which is another difficulty with the language that has been suggested today, or we have what rule 24 provides for — subsequent decisions based on advances in a particular body — we have a decision granting a negotiating mandate to a subsidiary body. Your draft does not prejudice anyone of those pathways, but I am afraid that, if we were to put this language, then we would put ourselves in a straitjacket.

You have been steering us very skilfully between the Scylla of very narrow interpretations of national security and the Charybdis of procedural conundrums which keep the Conference in the state that it is. If we were to add something like this, then we would tip over to one side or the other and we would lose the reason why we are doing this.

I will conclude by urging all delegations to join in the sincere effort that you have made and that many others have made. I urge everyone in the room to look at this as a window of opportunity. Our colleague from the Netherlands pointed out that time is not unlimited: even with this decision, we would need time to work out who coordinates which subsidiary body, establish their schedule of work and get going. If we lose this opportunity, *then* we lose valuable time right at the beginning of the year. So we are in your good hands and we hope that our friends from China, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam can get to their new year celebrations quickly. Mr. President, we are ready to work with you for an early decision on this draft.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India for capturing the long process during which we have tried to come to agreement on this document. It shows, I think, how much we have tried to accommodate people, just to make sure that very significant principles in various parts of the room are not jettisoned in any way, and where safeguards were brought in. I think it is in that spirit that we approach today.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for your ongoing efforts and patient negotiation in recent weeks not only to present us with a proposal but also to lead the related discussions with such determination. Today marks the end — or, rather, Sunday will officially, but let us say today — of your efforts to definitively reach an agreement in plenary on your proposal to structure this year's work. I think that you truly deserve for the plenary to support your efforts, it would make perfect sense. We have every confidence in our good friends who will take over the presidency on Monday, but we would very much like to see this logical step taken. You deserve that much, as I think it is a constructive proposal. I have lost count of how many alternatives have been put forward today to try and consider how to negotiate treaties on the basis of discussions using the framework you have proposed, namely five coordinators and five subsidiary bodies, and we shall see whether the discussions will be formal or informal. Rule 18 on consensus is here to stay. The proposal you have submitted also includes a series of reminders and rules that are already covered in the rules of procedure but are nonetheless repeated here, such as rules 24, 28 and 29. We could have reproduced the whole of the rules of procedure to put our minds at ease and to remind us that the President has to draw up a programme of work, that consensus is the basic rule and that, ultimately, the subsidiary bodies may be formal or informal. We already know all this from the rules of procedure we have in our libraries or on our computers. Accordingly, I believe that this draft decision provides every guarantee we need to proceed with our work.

There is a very frank debate among some of the delegations and I wish to highlight the point raised by the delegation of Mexico with regard to its concern that this body is more deliberative than negotiation-oriented. We completely agree with Mexico, and, I believe, with all the delegations at this plenary meeting, that the Conference is designed to negotiate. I understand perfectly that we wish to include in the text all the references to the fact that negotiation is a standing obligation, that is, that it provides the functional coherence of our plenaries. However, I believe that this comes through to some degree in the draft and, if it is not completely the case, there will be time during the session to demonstrate it in our discussions and to recall that, instead of repeating so much of what has been said in other years, we should come together to reach a good-faith agreement to negotiate. There will be time to do this. That said, I think the idea is reflected in the draft decision. I point this out after experiencing the Conference last year, at a difficult time — though I believe it was artificially complicated, since life is simple — and, frankly, I think we need to bring a bit of simplicity to our discussions of such complicated topics as disarmament. We should avoid further complicating what is already not a very hopeful situation. No one is unaware of the fact that the disarmament and global security picture has not been the easiest in recent years. We should bring a little simplicity into our approach and at least try to create the potential for future success, with the benefit of our five coordinators and discussions, and see how we can move forward. I do not really have anything else to suggest and so I congratulate you on this proposal, Mr. President, and I would invite everyone to adopt it without complicating our lives any more than necessary.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Spain for his statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, it has been four weeks now, I think, since you started your presidency and gave us not only food for thought but also an opportunity to shape something on the basis of your compilation document, which captured all the proposals made between 2000 and 2017 by different presidencies of the Conference on Disarmament. It was a clear indication of the amount of work we had put in over the years and, at the same time, of the frustration of not having been in a position to adopt a formal programme of work with negotiating mandates, which is of course what we all seek to achieve in this body. You came with the next best thing, which is the idea of having a breakthrough in the sense that we can shift gears towards substantive work and structured discussions. I very much like the phrase of my colleague from Australia — "give ourselves maximum manoeuvring room for progress within the rules of procedure" — while fully respecting the rules of procedure. I think this is what this decision achieves.

I heard a lot about Chinese New Year and I made a big effort not to bring up the issue of the carnival in Brazil, which is this week. I just learned about the winning samba school last Wednesday. I think it is an event that perhaps lasts longer than Chinese New Year. In Brazil, people have a break of more than a week and it has not been easy to get feedback from the capital on the rapid evolution of your text, which has been changing on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we always had the full attention of Brasilia. We managed to send all the texts and I can say that I am fully covered. I can support the text as it is. I can fully support it without any additional amendment. In this case, I sort of converge with others who have expressed the notion that they are in a position to adopt the text as presented. So, at this point, to reopen the issue and start factoring in additional amendments — though some of the amendments I would not have anything against per se — I just wonder what the added value would be at this point, with the possibility of reopening the dam and the whole text unravelling. That is the concern. As we know, there are many countries which are holding back. Many of us would have additional proposals and positions; many of us have already made a number of concessions to accommodate the position of others. By being silent and accepting the text as it is it does not mean that we are fully satisfied with everything in it and that we did not have to make concessions to arrive at this point to make a last-ditch attempt at consensus.

So I think that we are now facing the possibility of diminishing returns if we reopen the text to the amendments that have been proposed. I fully agree with the interpretation and explanations given by the Ambassador of India on the different specific amendments that were proposed during the course of this morning's session. I tend to agree that you can read the current draft in a way that actually accommodates and says the same thing as the amendments that are being proposed attempt to do. So I think that it is really now at this point just a matter of interpretation. Perhaps we can somehow seek to clarify this interpretation by making statements as we consider and adopt the text, that is one possibility; but I think that nothing in the text negates what has been proposed. I read the "inter alia" in the same way as my Indian colleague: it just provides a slight additional freedom for the subsidiary bodies to perform their work, but of course on the understanding that operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c) would be fully implemented. It is not a blank cheque for the partial implementation of operative paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c). Quite the contrary: it is just the floor, it is not the ceiling. So that is my interpretation. If perhaps we could add some wording that would make it more explicit, that would be fine, of course. We can still seek until the last minute to make small changes that perhaps might get us there.

Again, the issue of continuity for my delegation is a critical one. Maybe not everyone has fully appreciated the fact that if we take this decision, we have to constitute five subsidiary bodies. That means a lot of work for 2018, because we will have five subsidiary bodies and five coordinators. They will meet for a certain amount of time, under a certain schedule that has to be drawn up. We will have discussions; we might invite experts. I think that many missions would probably require additional members in their delegations to cope with the additional work. It would be a sharp increase in discussions and work this year. Then, if we make all this investment without signalling at least a desire for it to be built on and to continue it the following year, it makes no sense. So I think we have to give at least the notion that there is this desire for continuity, but not continuity on a standstill basis, continuity as in progress. We have to move forward and each year build more and come to the point where we can extract the much-desired and at the same time elusive negotiating mandates of instruments or effective measures. I also think that those two words are flexible enough to accommodate different views on this matter and different possibilities, depending on the issue and on the subsidiary body at hand.

I also do not have very strong views on formal and informal sessions, but I understand that this is a very sensitive issue for many delegations and that the solution you have proposed is a very good one. It is a great middle ground and I think that it respects a very technical and precise reading of the rules of procedure, because the rules of procedure do not prevent us from saying what you have proposed in this draft decision. To continuously try to improve on this text at this point will just make us take the road of failing for the hundredth or thousandth time. So I would be very supportive of moving ahead with the draft as it is. If there is a need of course for some minor, very minor

accommodation of language that could help us to have a clean adoption today, I would rally to that option too. I will leave it to you to make the judgment. Thank you very much for all the dedicated and very competent work you have performed. This is a very serious proposal and my capital has allowed me to state that we fully support it.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Brazil for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, thank you for your considerate arrangement yesterday so that this delegation could have the pleasure of enjoying Chinese New Year's Eve and I would also like to inform the colleagues that today the Mongolian New Year also coincides with the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese New Year. The problem is that I took the liberty of drinking too much good Swiss wine last night and right now I still have a very strong hangover and a headache, and the dizzy effects are still there. So I do not want to go into difficult negotiations, although most delegates have a strong wish to have negotiations in the Conference. We all know that a crying baby can usually eat more milk and we need to give our colleagues, give each other a little bit, to step down and to do something to make each and every one of us happy so that we can leave the room earlier.

For this delegation, we can accept any result of the discussion today. With or without any decision, life will go on and the earth will continue to circle around the sun. If possible, if delegates wish to reopen negotiations or discussions on the text, I would also like to add one paragraph at the end of the draft saying that "starting from the year 2019, the agricultural lunar new year will be the official holiday of the Conference on Disarmament".

The President: I thank the delegate from China for his comment. I now give the floor to the delegation of Hungary.

Ms. Kroll (Hungary): Mr. President, thank you very much for all of the work you have put into this document. There is a lot of work behind it and we have to remind ourselves of two very important things.

One is that it is not an end product of substantive work; it is only a procedural document. Second, we already have consensus on your approach to create subsidiary bodies. I think there is a momentum on that and we should use that momentum today to have your decision adopted as it is. I think concerning what I heard from the delegates of Mexico and Iran that those points are not severe problems and let me reflect only on two bigger changes that were suggested today.

One of them was paragraph 5 bis, the new paragraph. I think that, if we have a new decision on a negotiating mandate, then it will automatically take care of how we organize the work after that. So it will automatically overrule this decision and we do not need to mention anything in this decision. I think it is not necessary at all.

Let me reflect on the Iranian proposal to delete the last paragraph. I really do not understand the Iranian proposal because with the last paragraph at the moment we have a time limit on our work: it says that it has to be reconfirmed. If we delete it, the time limit disappears and it could be a bigger concern for Iran if the decision stays as it is. So on behalf of Iran, I would be happier to have paragraph 6 than to delete it, because otherwise we are without a time limit. So I would recall that it is very important that we really have consensus now on your approach and on the creation of subsidiary bodies and we should not lose this momentum.

The President: I thank the delegation of Hungary for its statement and now I give the floor to the delegation of Chile.

Mr. Lagos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish our colleagues from China and other Asian countries, as well as the entire Conference, a happy new year of the dog. I hope our dog this year is not a rabid one but a docile household pet.

My delegation would once again like to express our gratitude for your and your delegation's efforts, Mr. President, which over the past few weeks have been required nearly around the clock in order to arrive at this decision. It seems to us that this is commendable and should be recognized. This is undoubtedly a compromise document,

which is why we understand that not all suggestions by delegations could be reflected. In my delegation's case, we note for example that, in this latest version, the explicit reference to civil society participation, to which my country was particularly attached, has been reduced, or I would even say removed altogether. However, we understand that all the delegations need to make concessions, so we support the adoption of this text and call on all delegations to demonstrate the flexibility required to preserve the constructive and unusually positive atmosphere in this chamber that has characterized the presidency of Sri Lanka.

We have listened attentively to this morning's statements by delegations, which have added some very interesting proposals for amendments, in particular the suggestion by Mexico to add a paragraph. In our view, the addition of a paragraph 5 bis is a relevant suggestion, because we keep being told that adopting this decision will not entail sacrificing our common ambition to reach an agreement on the programme of work. However, we understand the need to maintain the balance of the text and therefore share the opinion voiced this morning by other delegations that we should completely avoid reopening discussions. Thus, we urge delegations not to insist on putting forward further proposals, so that we can adopt the decision.

Obviously, to consider this decision a great historic success would be an exaggeration, because it is clear that our common goal should be to finally adopt the long-awaited programme of work. Nevertheless, we recognize the value of this initiative, insofar as it allows us to move forward, however incrementally, towards this goal.

The President: I thank the delegation of Chile. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am sorry that, again, I take the floor for a second time. In response to some of the comments which have been made by colleagues, one by one, I have to respond. First, I have to start with my neighbour, the Ambassador of India. I do not agree with the elaboration he has given on certain points, for the same reason. He was indicating that in the preambular paragraphs, where we say that due to the complexity of the issues, when the time has come, discussion could be started on issues on which we have reached a consensus. The language is there, I know how the language has been worked out to make it read "the complex nature of the issues under its purview, the wide range of perspectives thereon, including on the levels of maturity of their consideration".

The same problem that we have here in this meeting shows how much people are trying to give their own narratives on the maturity of discussions. Now certain colleagues in this room are trying to say that on this decision we have matured to a decision — which is not correct. The same could happen with the subsidiary bodies. How is it that on this decision where we have not reached a point of consensus people are saying that we are reopening issues? They have never been closed, it has been an ongoing discussion on the draft decision. Trying to highlight that the decision is at the point where we could reach consensus — the same thing could happen in the subsidiary bodies. Time and again, we have seen that, in the subsidiary bodies, on several occasions, people try to give their own narratives on the level of the discussion that we have reached and try to impose them on others. So you do not have to provide language to say that in all of the areas that we are considering there should be a kind of progress to be achieved, which would enable us to get a programme of work.

What is harmful about the language we have provided to delegations? Do you want to say that your narratives on certain points are mature enough to be discussed? On certain points there is no maturity. So our language is there, please go and see what the language is. We say emphasizing that the Conference's progress towards each item under consideration by subsidiary bodies will be essential to reach a comprehensive and balanced programme of work. What is the point of that? Is it something that we could actually question in principle? This paragraph would balance the other paragraph we have on some other areas, which would have open interpretations. The people who manoeuvre the circumstances of negotiations try to say that we have reached a level of understanding, now it is mature and we can discuss certain things. So, with the paragraph that we have now provided, we think

that it is essential to give guidance to the subsidiary bodies so that all subsidiary bodies should make progress. That is one point.

Another point I again see concerning the procedure is that I hope we are not in a position to say that we are reopening things. Who has said that this draft decision has been closed? A number of colleagues have provided some language, including my own delegation, and we would like to ask for some reflection on it by the Conference. Others have said that in this meeting they would like to have a counterproposal. We are open to counterproposals. We would never reject any proposal that might come from other quarters. We are very much open to any suggestions so that we could reach consensus. Two delegations, at least, in this meeting have come with a certain proposal. In our view, that needs to be reflected on by our colleagues.

About the Mexican proposals, we think that there is merit in these proposals. All those narratives which have been given by some of our colleagues saying that we are going to consider minor proposals only if something is not in conformity with the overall exercise that we have to reach a consensus. Minor or major proposals, they are proposals coming from different delegations. They might, in your view, be minor, they might, for certain others, be major. In our view, all those proposals are major. In our reading of the whole text provided, we have provided language on the rules of procedure, emphasizing rule 24. I do not know how much we have tried to amend the rules of procedure. This draft decision, which you have provided, Mr. President, is not in full conformity with rule 24. Rule 24 is very clear that all subsidiary bodies should meet informally unless the Conference decides otherwise. In your draft decision, you have put another word "formally", because you want to give an interpretation of the word "otherwise". We might have our own interpretation; but leave it aside, let us stick to the language of the rules of procedure. So these are the very minor proposals. What is the harm?

Even the proposal by the Mexican delegation, what is the point of that one? Of course they should defend their proposals. The point is that about operative paragraph 5 bis they said that the overall exercise of the Conference is to do negotiations, is it not? If we came to believe on certain points that a consensus is concluded on certain items, then the whole exercise will be concluded. It is a fact. We have had the same approach on other decisions. What is the harm in that — giving indications that negotiations, which are the whole purpose of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament body, should work towards a negotiation mandate, as we have mandated in this room? What is the point? Please, when we are going to have our reflections, we should say that it should be a balanced and comprehensive programme or that we should be careful, we should be consistent with the rules of procedure, consistent with practice, the practice that we have had on previous occasions. So, at this juncture, Mr. President, I do not have anything to add, but I would like to emphasize that we need to continue our consultations further so that the emerging consensus will hopefully satisfy everybody, including those delegations who might have further suggestions in the coming days.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Iran for his statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Omarov (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, thank you for all your efforts that have come to reaching some consensus. I have an instruction from Astana to support the text as it is. It may be that this text is not comprehensively balanced, but it is minimally balanced. To our understanding, the compromise is a minimum mutually acceptable outcome, but not mutually exclusive. Yes, we are not talking about opening, reopening or closing the discussion on the text. But if we delete some words, for instance, "inter alia", after other delegations want to include after "legal" the words "and other measures", is that also balanced or not?

We also want to support our Belarusian colleague's comment about the time limit after 21 years. The next presidency will have a high-level segment. After Switzerland, we have a split session. All these matters do not work for us, it means losing time again and the adoption of some decisions in the middle of the year, and afterwards there will not be much time for real work. Maybe this is a philosophical question, but what is the programme of work? Is it some schedule of activities or about establishing some subsidiary bodies and

working groups as they were before? So, at this stage, we are ready to support this text as it is.

The President: I thank the delegation of Kazakhstan. I now give the floor to the delegation of Canada.

Mr. Davison (Canada): Mr. President, I want to thank you and your team for all your efforts over the last four weeks to drive us forward towards a decision, towards some sort of schedule of discussions over the course of the next 20 weeks. We have not pronounced during this time on the decision, but the remarks of the Brazilian Ambassador today have caused us to change our minds and to open up a little bit. The Canadian perspective on this was that, frankly, although much more artfully prepared than the text of the working group on the way ahead last year, this is the working group on the way ahead with, in 2018, working groups called subsidiary bodies, and an agreement hopefully being reached far more quickly than we did last year. The only other specific innovation that we saw was the possibility that the subsidiary bodies could speak formally, as well as informally. So we are a little pained at the thought that now some are arguing that these groups should be only informal. At the end of our meetings last year, despite all of the time and effort we put into our discussions, we had no conclusive conclusions on anything and, you know, operative paragraph 5 of document CD/WP.605/Rev.2 kind of leads me to think we are headed in that same direction. It says, "report on the progress achieved and agreed on". Oh my God, if we all have to agree on something, we know that we will not agree on very much at the end of the day, because it just needs one of us in the subsidiary bodies to say "no" and that is it. We would have preferred something that puts the onus on the coordinator to come up with a summary of the discussions and any points of agreement, but not that they be required to get the agreement of all of us on what took place. As I say, one delegation does not like it and that is it; and we have very little left for the record.

With all that said, my instructions were to be flexible and constructive and to go along with the majority. The majority has spoken time and time again through the last two weeks that they like what you are proposing. There have been minor suggestions along the way, but I agree with those who have spoken today. If you keep on taking suggestions, we will go into the Swedish presidency and perhaps beyond, because the high-level week is in two weeks and that would put everything in abeyance. So we would agree to the text as it is now. However, there have been some suggestions made today that might not unravel things. So we would put ourselves in your hands to perhaps tinker a little further with it, but not much more. You have done a very able job so far and we appreciate all your efforts, but we do not want to start all over again with another presidency; although that seems to be where we are headed. So again, thank you very much, we agree to the text as is it now, but we could take a few further modifications based on your best judgment.

The President: I thank the delegation of Canada and I want to assure you that that is exactly what I propose to do. I will be hearing all the comments which have been made and I thank everyone for having a very candid, honest discussion here. Then we will move on to how we try to make an effort to adopt this.

Let me now give the floor to the delegation of Germany.

Mr. Pilz (Germany): At the outset, I just wanted to remind the Ambassador of Brazil that carnival is not confined to Brazil. In Germany, we have the tradition that politicians are allowed to heap acid comments on political opponents at the end of carnival. I will not do this today, I will be constructive.

I would like to hail the efforts of the President again to broker a compromise on the document that we all have in front of us. Just to summarize the discussion we had at the opening of the session: a comprehensive, balanced programme of work was not in the offing, so there was simply the need to build a procedural bridge to get us there. How can we do this?

I think the proposal that you put forward constitutes such a bridge because it will add substance, compared with the working group on the way ahead which we had last year, and it sets a framework for a more focused and continuous debate of the core issues. It constitutes a well-brokered balance between flexibility and safeguards — safeguards which

are well anchored in the rules of procedure. We have explicit references to rules of procedure 23, 24, 28 and 29, to all the relevant rules of procedure which usually guide us through our work. This is a sufficient safeguard for those who think that the continual discussion of the subjects in this context could prevent us indefinitely from taking up negotiations. I think that this has been carefully balanced and is well reflected in the document. So we are now facing two choices: either to adopt the document as it stands, maybe with some minor modifications which we do not necessarily favour, or to idle away another season here in the Conference. I think that most of us clearly prefer the first choice because it gives us some hope and some prospect of achieving something concrete in the near term as well.

To conclude, I want to say one thing that I was reminded of during the course of this discussion. We have to look at the text and also the efforts of the President in the context of the need to negotiate and to discuss in good faith. If we want to misinterpret something, we can always do this. The document which has been put forward is not a Trojan horse, it is not a poisoned gift and it is not a trap explicitly designed to get somebody to enter it. It was negotiated and drafted in good faith, with the inclusion of everybody. To indefinitely extend a discussion on the refining of this document would amount to removing the thrust and the direction of the document. If there is nothing left of its content, there is nothing left to agree on. So that is why I appeal to the Conference to adopt the document as it stands, maybe with some minor modifications which could be brokered in closed consultations; but the context and the content should be safeguarded.

The President: I thank the delegation of Germany. I now give the floor to the delegation of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Please forgive our delegation for taking the floor yet again, but we think it is necessary to respond to some of the comments that have just been made. Firstly, we wish to reiterate that the concerns we are raising are by no means new; we have been raising them with you since the beginning of the proceedings. So we are not just coming to you at the last minute; these are concerns that have not been properly taken into account. I think the assumption that we have reached consensus or that everyone was brought to the table and all positions were considered is just that, an assumption, and does not correspond with the reality. My delegation does not feel that its concerns have been truly reflected in this new version and, as you told us yesterday during the discussion, when we repeated our concerns, you said you would not seek to urge us to adopt the decision today unless we all felt that we had been a part of it. Our delegation, we repeat, is attempting to be flexible as we involve ourselves constructively in the negotiation of this decision so as to give it a chance, in the hope that it will be a useful tool for achieving the goal we are all striving towards, namely negotiating matters of disarmament.

What we would like to see is a genuine demonstration of flexibility from all sides, not merely from a couple of delegations. We would also like for us all to work together towards this agreement and not to assume we have an agreement before one has actually been reached. I also want to reiterate my delegation's willingness to reach one, we believe it is achievable; we are certainly not asking for these discussions to go on any longer than is necessary. I think our proposals are very clear and specific. We made a real effort to explain them, so that members would understand the reasons behind them. So I think you will understand that it is no longer just a matter of taking a constructive approach but also a question of good faith, like the current exercise. And we call on the Conference to pursue this exercise with due seriousness, because I think doing so would boost our chances of reaching a solution. It is important for us.

In this connection, we stress the importance of considering the amendments we put forward. In particular, I think there were some doubts about the request to delete "inter alia", so I wanted to explore it a bit further. As we have already mentioned, the current wording of the decision leaves the mandate wide open. The phrase "inter alia" opens the door to absolutely everything, for better or worse. I say "for better or worse" because obviously we do not have any issue with using "inter alia" – of course we can use the term – since it is so broad that it could in some way or another lead to negotiations on nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut-off treaty, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative

security assurances, etc., given that these topics are de facto on the agenda and we could, "inter alia", consider them. That is not a problem. It is what my delegation wanted and what we have been seeking. The problem we see, and it is a real danger, is that if we are attempting to go beyond what we have done in the past — and I think this was perfectly expressed by the delegation of Canada — we do not see exactly what contribution this will make. We are giving it a chance, but we do not see what improvement it would bring about. What we really want to do, by deleting "inter alia", is to ensure that we do not do less than what is currently put forward in paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c). So what we would like to do, at the very least, is to focus on those areas to see whether, with the proposal that is currently on the table, we can truly move forward. So this is a genuine attempt to achieve this aim. That is all we want. In addition, we really want to say that the resistance to the deletion of the phrase is raising suspicion and concern that the intention is to have the subsidiary bodies do more than what is provided for in paragraph 1 (a), (b) and (c), in other words have them do what is not included in these subparagraphs. So, if this is not what we want and if the goal of the decision is to generate confidence, setting an unconditional mandate is not the way of achieving that. We want you to give our delegation's proposals serious consideration so that we can get on with the work.

I would like to say something about some of the other comments that have been made in this chamber. I have already touched on the point made by some that you, Mr. President, have taken into account all the concerns. But I repeat, not all the concerns have been taken into account; I have just discussed one that has not, the one that for us is perhaps the most important. And the point about there being consensus — there is no consensus. As for paragraph 5 bis, frankly, we fail to understand why there is such resistance to the inclusion of this paragraph. The reason for this exercise is that we are unable to adopt a programme of work. The only scenario in which this exercise is worthwhile is if a programme of work with a negotiating mandate is adopted. So what is the problem? If you are saying that this goal is impossible to achieve, then why not agree to include the paragraph? Moreover, just to be clear that it is not automatic or obvious, at this time the decision does not unequivocally state that the subsidiary bodies would stop their work in the event that a programme of work was adopted. That is exactly why the inclusion of this paragraph is being requested. This point was mentioned by the delegation of Hungary and I simply wanted to clarify it.

The President: I thank the representative of Mexico for her statement. I now give the floor to the delegation of Morocco.

Mr. Boutadghart (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to reiterate our thanks for the commendable efforts made by you and your team and to assure you of our full support.

Over the past four weeks, Morocco has had the privilege and honour of acting as coordinator of the Group of 21, which has enabled my delegation to witness not only the interaction with the Sri Lankan presidency of the Conference but also the inclusive and transparent manner in which the presidency has carried out consultations in order to produce the document presented today. For us, this is a draft that, as you have emphasized, strikes a delicate balance between the different positions, which is why we view as relevant and useful the questions asked by our colleague from Belarus and also the comments made by the Ambassador of the Netherlands, and we certainly agree that time is not on our side.

Having said that, we agree with the majority of the delegations that have already expressed their support for the draft decision, which is not an end in itself but a procedural means of relaunching the substantive work of the Conference. We therefore call for greater flexibility, so as to maintain a constructive spirit of consensus and make it possible to adopt this draft and move on to the next stage on the path to achieving a comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

The President: I thank the delegation of Morocco. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Latvia.

Mr. Karklins (Latvia): I was asking for the floor to speak on behalf of the informal group of observer States. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having accommodated the group's request to be associated with the work of subsidiary bodies,

should such bodies be established by the Conference, if the proposed draft decision is adopted. I would also like to use this opportunity to express the unease of the members of the informal group of observer States with the decision of the six Presidents not to provide the same treatment for the group's coordinator as in previous years by inviting the coordinator to join the six meetings with the regional coordinators on a needs-only basis. The members of the informal group of observer States really do not understand the reasons for the change in treatment towards the group's coordinator and would urge the six Presidents to reconsider the issue, or else to explain the reasons for the change of the long-standing attitude towards the group's coordinator.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Latvia speaking on behalf of the informal group of observer States and, as its coordinator, I will take note of the point he made. I will be discussing it with the Swedish President when I meet the Ambassador prior to his taking office, so that that discussion can continue.

Let me now give the floor to the delegation of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have already talked about this several times in this chamber, dear colleagues, but let us consider what we mean when we refer to the concerns of different delegations. These concerns are not about security interests being adversely affected; they are matters that can actually be addressed effectively through discussion and then action.

That said, however, even with regard to the amendments made in this room today and previously, we have heard various points of view on these proposals. Obviously, there are differences of opinion, but, ultimately, this is a classic dead end, leading us nowhere. If we debate procedural decisions so vigorously, just take a moment to imagine what will happen with the discussions themselves when security considerations come into play. Judging by today's discussions, their outcome is already decided.

We are, somehow, attempting to predetermine the end result by putting forward individual amendments, yet it seems to me that the biggest problem lies not in specific formulations, but in the general attitude and the unwillingness to compromise. The problems start not when constructive proposals are put forward but when these proposals are exalted to the level of absolute truth, blocking the path to compromise.

It seems to me that the proposed amendments, including those made today, however valid they may be, will have absolutely no effect on the outcome of the work of the subsidiary bodies. Everything will depend, in the end, on the attitude adopted, and the attitude in these groups will, naturally, depend on the delegations.

In this regard, I have one simple suggestion: put an end to these discussions and make a decision.

The President: I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation. I give the floor to the Ambassador of India.

Mr. Gill (India): Mr. President, I just wanted to make a couple of points. I think that when the Ambassador of Iran referred to my statement, perhaps there was a mischaracterization. I did not refer to that preambular paragraph in the manner that was described. Every one of us has the right to have their own narrative. My delegation has the right to its own narrative and we are not questioning that; in fact, what you are doing there is preserving the right of every delegation to have its own narrative.

I also did not comment on the language that is there after operative paragraph 5, I mean the proposal that has been made by Iran whose placement was not defined. Now, there I have a problem. I did not mention it then, but, now that I have the opportunity, I have a problem with what was said: that subsidiary bodies need to make progress so that we have something to work on in terms of a programme of work. That is raising the bar even more on a programme of work. We already have difficulties in getting to a programme of work, so if we were to condition a future decision on a programme of work on the progress made in the subsidiary bodies sought to be established under the decision, we would make it all the more difficult. So I hope that we do not make our life more difficult, that we make our life less difficult. We agree that there is a need for a balanced and comprehensive

approach. We agree that there is a need for negotiation. We also agree on the priority of issues related to nuclear disarmament. But I think that we should make sure that we do not make our life difficult.

The second point I want to make is that there has been mention of the issue of trust. I think that is very important. Our Russian colleague has just said that it all depends on how we carry out our work and working in an atmosphere of trust would be important. There is another perspective on trust, which is that there is a concern that some of the proposals that are being made are aimed at keeping the Conference in a less than optimal situation, so that we can keep saying that the Conference on Disarmament does not work, that this is not the forum for negotiation and that there is another forum for negotiations. So I think that we have to overcome this trust deficit also. If these amendments are giving us the impression that we are going down that path, then we have a problem and I invite delegations to be mindful of that problem. It is a serious problem and we have to be mindful of this.

Finally, Mr. President, you said that you are listening very carefully and that now you will look at what is coming next. I wanted to agree with our colleague from Brazil that this is now more a problem of interpretation, about what the draft decision intends to do or what certain references to rules of procedure imply or do not imply. If we can work on clarifying that, perhaps, through you, through the presidency, then it might help our colleagues. The Ambassador of Iran is right that, whether proposals are minor or major, they all need to be considered. So maybe you could look at that while we move to a situation where our Russian colleague wants us to move; that would be the preference. We do not want to prolong the discussions on a Friday, but if the interpretation route helps, we would urge you to consider that.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of India. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I see that some of our dear colleagues are very much pushing towards a hasty decision, which is not conducive to and is not in conformity with the practice that we have in the Conference on Disarmament. However, we are very flexible on that. If they want to push for that, we are very ready to work with you all night, it does not matter. The point is, Mr. President, that our dear friends sometimes give their narratives on the language that they have provided and we give our narratives on the language that we have provided. The language that we have provided for operative paragraph 3 would stand as operative paragraph 4 bis. There is no harm if we have the whole exercise.

The aim of this meeting, indeed your decision, is to have a balanced and comprehensive programme of work and for that you have provided a number of items to be discussed, or understandings to be reached, and you have mentioned four and five subsidiary bodies. Four is very clear and the other one is a combination of the many other items that might come up for discussion. The point is, are we going to work substantively on each and every item or not? If it is the case, we have tried to highlight all those items on an equal footing. So what is the harm in saying that it would be essential to reach progress towards any items which could help to get to the programme of work?

What is the point? The point is that our dear friends might think that progress on only one item is enough to get the comprehensive programme of work. That is not at all something that would be in full conformity with the exercise we have had in the last 20 years. What have we been discussing in the last 20 years? Some of our friends are trying to have a stand-alone decision on one thing, compromising the other things. We will say no to that: a comprehensive and a balanced programme of work is needed for all that on an equal footing. We should deal with all the issues: item 1, item 2, negative security assurances, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and other issues that we might have — any issues that we have elaborated. What is the point? We would like to highlight that it is essential that we, in good faith, engage on all items, without any distinction, to work towards a concerted outcome of these deliberations, which in our view would enable us to get a comprehensive programme of work.

What is the point? Where is the contradiction? It might contradict what you see as your interests. You might say that in the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear

disarmament there is no need for progress; but on other items there might be a need for progress: on transparency in armaments or cutting off something else. The point is that, if we are going to have a fair and comprehensive approach towards a programme of work, and your paper is a good basis to start on that, we should continue with our deliberations on subsidiary bodies to act as such. They should not be different. Your draft decision is aimed at giving an equal footing to all of those items, and we are appreciative of the objective that you have followed. That is why Tehran has instructed me to orally support you in your exercise towards that aim. We hope that, with the minor changes we have provided, you could get a good decision, so that it would help us in the subsidiary bodies to engage on all items without distinction, on all items, constructively, in order to have a fruitful outcome of those deliberations.

For that, I think that we should not push as such. If the time is not ripe for any kind of decision, or there is a need for further elaboration by our distinguished colleagues, Iran is very much open-minded about receiving any proposals. Even our dear friend from India says that we have a problem with our language. We are very flexible about seeing their language for a counterproposal to our proposal. It does not matter. Any delegation might have its own counterproposal; we are very much open-minded to receiving such proposals and to considering them. We are also going to engage with you to reach an outcome during your presidency, I hope. Of course, time is very important so that we get the result soon. This is, of course, something of high value for my delegation and we do not want to waste time; but we need time to reflect on every proposal, including my own delegation's proposal.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Iran for his statement. I do not see any other request for the floor. Now I see the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you Mr. President, I apologize for taking the floor, but I just want to echo some of the comments that were made here. I think that most of us came to this chamber this morning expecting to take action on your draft decision. I am assuming that your inclination is still to do that. My delegation would certainly support and encourage that step.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States. I see the delegation of Russia.

Mr. Deyneko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I apologize to you all for taking the floor again. As I see it, we have devoted quite enough time at today's meeting to considering the proposals that have been made. Yet not one delegation has raised fundamental objections to your draft decision. I therefore wish to reiterate my proposal that we take a decision on the adoption.

The President: I thank the delegation of the Russian Federation. I do not see any more requests for the floor. My intention is to adjourn for the moment. I do not want to push back until 3 p.m. What would be my suggestion is that we take a reasonable break and get back in one hour. Then we will meet at 2 p.m.

The delegation of China wishes to take the floor.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Thank you Mr. President, this delegation is not ready to join any consensus after 1 p.m.

The President: May I ask the interpreters whether we are able to take a break earlier, whether we would be able to resume earlier?

All right, we shall meet at 2.15 p.m. Yes, the delegation of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, I have been falling asleep several times and tolerating all these discussions. I hope that all colleagues can, you know, exercise some restraint and have less egoism and let us go ahead in a fast manner. I think that a 50-minute informal consultation is enough and we can come back before 12.30 p.m. and we can finish this before1 p.m. I do not want, you know, to prolong this process again and again.

The President: I understand the sense of frustration that we are not finishing this earlier, but I ask you to bear with us in this process. We are trying not to push this too far

and when we come back at 2.15 p.m. we will either adopt it or else we will not adopt it. But let us give one more chance to try to evolve a consensus on this matter and, if we fail, so be it.

The Ambassador of Netherlands, followed by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea and the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, I fully align with the comments of the Russian and Chinese delegations. I would propose that we have a 10-minute or 15-minute break and resume at 12.30 p.m. The main thrust of your proposal has a lot of support. I think that the only thing needed is a little bit of fine-tuning with respect to all the positions that have been taken. There was such broad support being voiced in this chamber, I would propose that we have a short break and come back at 12.30 p.m. and decide on your proposal.

The President: The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, please.

Mr. Kim In-chul (Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to support what was said by China and the Netherlands. If the only reason why we have to meet again in two hours' time is to accommodate the interpreters and not because a delegation has requested two hours in order to obtain instructions, then we can do it at 12.30 p.m. I do not see why we need to wait for two hours.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea. The Ambassador of the United States, please.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, I agree with what has been said by China, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands. We just need to take a few minutes' break and reconvene. The longer this goes on into the afternoon, there are a number of countries around this table that I think would need to get instructions on any new text, whatever amendments have been made. So again, as has been said previously, we need to take action on this decision and to do it as soon as possible.

The President: The delegation of Indonesia, please.

Mr. Sidharta (Indonesia): Mr. President, Indonesia also celebrates the lunar new year today. The instruction that I received from my capital yesterday — where they were already not happy because they had to stay late for New Year's Eve — but the instruction I received is to support document CD/WP.605/Rev.2. So if we are going to continue the discussion, I think that we can go along with the fine-tuning of the document but not its extensive revision.

The President: All right, there seems to be reluctance to go for a long break. I see the delegation of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In order to decide whether or not my delegation needs a bit more time to consider, we first need to know what you plan to do, Mr. President, whether you will consider our proposals or whether you will impose the decision without having taken them into account. We would thus like to hear your plans so that we can know whether or not we need to try to get back to our capital.

The President: I will be considering your proposals and I would like to do some fine-tuning and give back a document that we can either adopt or not adopt. I am advised that the interpreters will work till 1 p.m., maybe 10 minutes more, but after that they need a two-hour break. So I understand that this is not a request from the floor, but this is a practical aspect of which we have to take account. So, without spending further time, let us break now and let us reconvene at 12.45 p.m. The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 1.05 p.m.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I have very carefully taken note of the various suggestions made by delegations and tried to do a little more work on the text to accommodate some of these requests made from the floor. I have also been conscious of the need not to disrupt the very careful balancing that we had undertaken from the very outset in the various iterations of this draft. I think that I have consulted extensively, as much as is humanly possible. I think that I have also accommodated ideas, agreed with some of the

intent of some of the ideas and I have always made the point that I have to try to bring everyone together.

On this basis, these are the amendments to the proposal, which was given to you this morning, without the watermark of 15 February 2018. I would like to read the changes that we have made at this point and, if you can take notes for the moment, we can then get a clean copy done once we have put it to the floor.

In the preambular paragraph beginning "Without prejudice to the right of any member State of the Conference to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference at a plenary and to further decisions that may be taken on substantive work", we have taken out the words "and negotiations" because some delegations have pointed out that negotiations are substantive work and, in deference to that concern, we have taken that phrase out.

In the preambular paragraph beginning "Cognizant of the complex nature of the issues under its purview, the wide range of perspectives thereon", we have stopped there and are deleting the words "including on the levels of maturity of their consideration". In paragraph 1, in the second part of the paragraph, the last sentence would read: "In their work the subsidiary bodies would pursue the following areas and any other areas agreed by the subsidiary bodies, in accordance with the rules of procedure." This takes care of the concern about the interpretations of the words "inter alia".

In operative paragraph 1 (b), we are taking out the word "gradually", so it would read "Deepening technical discussions and broadening areas of agreement, including through the participation, in accordance with the rules of procedure, of relevant experts."

Then, in operative paragraph 3, we had originally proposed that the paragraph should end with "the subsidiary bodies may meet formally as well as informally". There have been some concerns about that phrase in terms of whether it dilutes in any way what is in the rules of procedure. We propose to overcome that in this manner. Our proposal for operative paragraph 3 would read: "The subsidiary bodies shall conduct their work in accordance with paragraph 18 of the rules of procedure, with even allocation of time. In accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure, the subsidiary bodies shall meet informally. They may also meet formally, in accordance with the rules of procedure." So the primacy of the rules of procedure has been maintained fully. The fact that no single issue can be focused on has been secured by the words "even allocation of time". So we believe that this gives balance for the subsidiary bodies to work in a manner where, if there is consensus, there will be also the possibility of having some record of it and therefore some forward movement.

We feel that, yes, there was concern about the question of whether there should be a reiteration of the fact that, if a programme of work is agreed on, it is going to be jettisoned, whether this will continue and whether there will be parallel processes. I think that we have very clearly stated the position and brought it into the preambular paragraph. In fact, one of the statements made in this chamber in our preambular paragraph makes it very clear that this is done "without prejudice to the rules of procedure of the Conference and the responsibility entrusted to the President under the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament, in particular rule 29 for drawing up the programme of work of the Conference". I think that the Mexican delegation had some concerns about this. I have spoken to the Mexican Ambassador, to whom I have explained why we are doing what we are doing, and she was all right with that formulation. She did have problems with the point about "inter alia" and we have found a way to accommodate that concern in the way we have now reflected it in this document.

So I think you will see that we have made a very real effort to try to carry everybody, not to ignore any concern. I have not imputed any motive to anybody's concerns, because, after all, they are our concerns. I have tried to address them to the best of my ability, the best of my delegation's ability, and I think I made it very clear at the beginning that this was not the ideal, but this is what is possible. I see the Ambassador of Iran wants the floor. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Thank you for giving me the floor. We know that it has been a good exercise to improve a little bit the language, but unfortunately the language that we provided has not been reflected in the text, so we are not in a position to adopt this decision.

The President: Are there any other views? Ambassador, which particular aspect are you referring to, because some of your language has been accommodated?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Maybe because of the time constraints, colleagues are pushing to go very soon. It is very much highlighted in the language that we have provided. There were three points concerning the language. First and foremost, on "informal" and "formal" you are interpreting language which is not in the rules of procedure. Rule 24 of the rules of procedure is very clear. It says that the subsidiary bodies shall meet informally "unless the Conference decides otherwise". We would like to have the same language repeated. This is a clear deviation from the rules of procedure — a clear deviation.

The second point is that in operative paragraph 6 it says that we do not want to be prescriptive for next year. Let us have the exercise for this year and let us see how much progress we achieve and then decide how to proceed. You have not taken on board that we do not want that language. We have provided language to you and we are flexible: either we drop this language and/or we improve it, as we have provided the language.

There is another proposal for language we provided to you that has not been reflected. I know that the part about the issue of maturity — "the levels of maturity of their consideration" — has been removed; but the point which we made — that guidance is needed for progress on all items — is something that merits consideration. Of course, if all our dear friends think that there might be a balanced approach towards the whole issue of items, of course we are listening to them and let us see how we can engage in the subsidiary bodies towards that aim. But it is important that we give guidance to the subsidiary bodies. All of them need to make progress, tangible progress, on all items.

So, Mr. President, two minor proposals which we have made are not reflected in your text. One is about the rules of procedure and the second is that we would like to drop operative paragraph 6 and/or improve it in order to make it consistent with the practice that we have had in the Conference.

The President: Yes, thank you, Ambassador of Iran. I give the floor to the delegation of Mexico.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I did not catch the detail of your proposals. We would be very grateful if you could repeat the ones regarding operative paragraph 1 and 1 (b).

The President: Sorry if I was too fast. I am fighting against a deadline with the interpreters. I understand that they are going to cease work very soon, if they have not already.

The changes that were proposed to the text of the preambular paragraph beginning "Without prejudice" were that we dropped the words "and negotiations".

Do you want operative paragraph 1 only?

To overcome the entire problem, this is how we have reformulated the latter part of the paragraph: "In their work, the subsidiary bodies would pursue the following areas and any other areas agreed by the subsidiary bodies in accordance with the rules of procedure." Is that sufficient? Is there anything more?

Ms. Mercogliano (Acting Secretary of the Conference): She wants operative paragraph 1 (b).

The President: Operative paragraph 1 (b) will read: "Deepening technical discussions and broadening areas of agreement, including through the participation, in accordance with the rules of procedure, of relevant experts." So the word "gradually" has been removed.

Are there any other requests for the floor? I propose to adjourn the meeting now and I will resume the meeting at 3 p.m., when we were scheduled to meet. At that point, we will have to decide on this document. I just want to give delegations that have difficulties one more opportunity to try to come to some understanding. Of course, if delegations do not want this to go through, there is nothing that the President can do about it, but I think that we have now resolved almost all of the issues other than the two points that the Ambassador of Iran mentioned. I will try, to the best of my ability, to continue to engage on that, because, as I said, that was what I pledged to do. I seek the patience of those delegations who I know feel that this has gone too far, but I do not want to leave this chamber without trying everything in our capacity. If it has to fail after that, so be it. But let us put this document together properly, the iteration in writing, and come back at 3 p.m.

Before that, the Chinese delegation has requested the floor.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): I think that the proposal made by our Iranian colleague is very reasonable. Let us just copy the language from the rules of procedure. Does that constitute any difficulty for any delegation? I do not understand why. If we can agree to the language from the rules of procedure, we can leave now. We can take the decision now.

The President: I believe that what we have done is, in the paragraph which was proposed, we are stating very clearly "in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure, the subsidiary bodies shall meet informally". That is what it says. We are also saying that they may also "meet formally", in accordance with the rules of procedure. The rules of procedure allow the Conference to decide to meet formally, when it so deems.

The Chinese delegation please.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, I just want to offer a quick fix. Can we say that "the subsidiary bodies shall meet in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of the procedure"?

The President: I see the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): In a spirit of flexibility, the United States can agree either to the suggestion that was just made by our Chinese colleague or to the other proposal that was just made. We can live with going by the language stated clearly in paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure or, as I said, with the proposal made by the Chinese delegation.

The President: Ambassador of Iran, would the Chinese proposal be acceptable to you in this context?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, it is possible. We made our major proposal in the bilateral consultations with you. We could go with that. It was very clear what I proposed, but it was not agreed by you.

The President: The formulation would read: "The subsidiary bodies shall conduct their work in accordance with paragraph 18 of the rules of procedure, with even allocation of time, in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure."

Please repeat your proposal. The Chinese delegation, please.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, it is another sentence, which starts: "The subsidiary bodies shall meet in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure."

The President: So after the first sentence — "The subsidiary bodies shall conduct their work in accordance with paragraph 18 of the rules of procedure, with even allocation of time" — we would add "The subsidiary bodies shall meet in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure."

The delegation of Ireland has requested the floor.

Ms. Cullen (Ireland): Mr. President, since this is the first time I take the floor during your august presidency, may I begin by thanking you for the patient and hard-working weeks with you and your team. I have the smallest suggestion to make — not changing a single word of this paragraph — but the suggestion out of logic would be to invert the two sentences, since the subsidiary bodies meet first and then, after they meet, they conduct

their business. So, it is not a game-changer, it is simply putting the little blocks in a different sequence. All of us are infinitely grateful to you and your team for the transparency, dedication and consistency of your consultations.

The President: Thank you. OK, this is the inverted version: "The subsidiary bodies shall meet in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure and shall conduct their work in accordance with paragraph 18 of the rules of procedure, with even allocation of time."

Is that acceptable to all delegations? I do not see any objection. So I think we have resolved the problem which was of concern to the Ambassador of Iran.

Ambassador, is that satisfactory for you?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, I was just emphasizing the rules of procedure, noting that it was the language consistent with the rules of procedure. It was not something that we have invented. About the last paragraph, paragraph 6, we would like to propose the language we provided to you. However, in case our dear friends think that it would not fly, we do not insist, but we would like to drop the whole sentence, paragraph 6. We can ask our colleagues if maybe the wish of the Conference is to drop that paragraph. We could go along with that decision, if the paragraph is going to be dropped, otherwise, we would insist on our own language.

The President: The Ambassador of the Netherlands, please.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): Mr. President, with respect to operative paragraph 6, I would like to retain the original text.

The President: I see the Ambassador of the United States.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, just for my own sake, I have not heard the original Iranian request. So I would like to hear what the initial proposal was from Iran, just to see what it was.

The President: Ambassador of Iran, can you read your amendment please?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Our language is very simple. We would like to have the following. We would like to replace it with this phrase: "This decision is taken without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the subsequent annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament."

The President: Do you want this to be included at the end of operative paragraph 6, the present operative paragraph 6, Ambassador?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, we do not want to be that prescriptive about the decision to be reconfirmed for the next year. What we would like to say is that, without prejudice to the Conference's rules of procedure, we might decide next year or we might not decide. So let us put it that way, as a general statement, not a prescriptive one, so that it might be reconfirmed. We do not want to prejudge anything, so our language was very simple. We can drop this language, be silent on the whole issue. Then we know that next year, when we come, we might start from the last year. Do you see what I mean? Or we might start from the new point of departure we might have. I do not know, but, if our language is not acceptable to delegations, if we drop that language, we would like to provide other language which is somehow general, not prescriptive for 2019. Our language is what we have said and we would like to replace that language with this language.

The President: Ambassador, could you read that again, please — the language that you have?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): The language is: "The decision is taken without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament." That is it.

The President: So it would read: "This decision is taken without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament."

The delegation of Hungary, please.

Ms. Kroll (Hungary): In this case, we would like to drop the last paragraph, operative paragraph 6.

The President: Thank you, the delegation of Hungary. The Ambassador of Brazil, please.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, I would just like to point out what the recent amendments proposed. Those delegations who were hoping that this decision would not repeat the experience of last year on the working group on the way ahead are in a way sort of working in the direction of repeating the decision that was taken last year on the working group on the way ahead, to the effect that it is not clear whether subsidiary bodies can meet formally or not.

In any case, of course, this is a decision that the Conference will take. I was hoping that the decision would be taken today that they may meet formally and that would also be in line with the rules of procedure. If today we took the decision that, yes, they may meet formally, that does not contradict the rules of procedure, in the understanding of my delegation. I would have liked to see the last paragraph point in the direction of continuation, with progression of course, not continuation for the sake of continued paralysis, but on the understanding that operative paragraph 6 would not affect the sovereign decision of the Conference not to go ahead with this the following year. So, in the end, not saying anything does not really change much and perhaps the best solution would be simply to drop that last operative paragraph. I am a bit frustrated that we were not in a position today to take a decision that the subsidiary bodies may meet formally.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador of Brazil. The Ambassador of the United States, please.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Again, in a spirit of flexibility, we can live with either dropping operative paragraph 6 or we could accept the language that was offered by the representative of Iran.

The President: All right, now let me read what has finally been proposed on operative paragraph 6. The suggestion made by the Ambassador of Iran, which has also been supported or agreed to by some other delegations, reads: "This decision is taken without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament."

The delegation of Mexico has the floor.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have just one question regarding this proposal in terms of this limitation in time "at the beginning of" in relation to subsequent decisions. Does it mean that it is only for those decisions that are at the beginning of the session? I mean, for me, we can just limit it to any further decision of the Conference without limiting it to "at the beginning of" other sessions. We just have a concern about that part "at the beginning of". It was only a need to raise that.

The President: I see the Ambassador of the Netherlands.

Mr. Gabriëlse (Netherlands): I have similar problems with the proposal. I would still like to retain what we had and we could add "without prejudice to the rules of procedure". So we keep what we had and we add that phrase, which is in line with the thoughts of Iran. So we add "without prejudice to the rules of procedure" after the line you already had and I agree with Brazil that it is a pity that we do not have the possibility of deciding that the subsidiary bodies can meet formally. I interpret the rules of procedure that they can also meet formally.

The President: In the context of that proposal, if we are to bring in, as suggested, the phrase "without prejudice to the rules of procedure" to the original operative paragraph 6, would that not be acceptable to you, Ambassador of Iran?

Mr. Naziri Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Of course, insofar as it is referring to the rules of procedure, it is very good. This is the guidance upon which we are working, so no problem. Our distinguished colleague from Mexico is right in the sense that sometimes we

might be in the middle of the Conference and we might decide on certain things, that is right. But what we would like to highlight is the need to push at the beginning of each year to adopt certain things, either the agenda and/or the programme of work. This is in line with rule 27 of the rules of procedure, which says "at the beginning of each annual session, the Conference shall adopt its agenda for the year". So that is the agenda, the whole framework within which we work, and it is an aspiration that we would always like to start at the beginning, not later. Of course, we would not insist if that is problematic, we can drop the word "beginning". But we think it is much better that we have such a word in order to give the sense of the urgency of each year so that we do not delay any more.

The President: Ambassador, but in this earlier formulation, with your addition of "without prejudice to the rules of procedure", that covers both. So can I put it back?

The delegation of China wants to take the floor.

Mr. Ji Zhijun (China): I am a bit confused, as it seems that we are working on several versions of the text of this paragraph. I just want to thank Ambassador Wood for his flexibility; given the bilateral relationship between the United States and Iran, he is showing maximum flexibility. I appreciate that and I call on other colleagues to also follow suit.

The President: So, on operative paragraph 6, this is the suggestion, this is the formulation which has been suggested by the Chair: "This decision taken for the 2018 session, may be reconfirmed, as appropriate, at the beginning of the subsequent annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament, without prejudice to the rules of procedure."

I see the Ambassador of Iran.

Mr. Nazir Asl (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, we have the same problem: we do not want to see a prescriptive form saying that for the next year it might be reconfirmed. Therefore it is not in full conformity with the rules of procedure. We would like to say, in general terms, that this is valid for this year and that next year we will proceed in accordance with the rules of procedure. If some of our dear friends would like to have the rules of procedure, they can echo them, but not say that it could be "reconfirmed" or something like that. That notion is not in full conformity with the rules of procedure. Either we drop the paragraph and/or we have a general one, not a prescriptive one saying that for next year we give guidance that it would be "reconfirmed".

The President: All right, if that formulation is objected to, then we go back to the earlier one: "This decision is taken without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament."

Does the delegation of Mexico have a problem with "subsequent"?

The delegation of Mexico please.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Sorry, Mr. President. I mean, this is quite confusing. I have to be honest. I think if you are not going to accept something, do not go backwards, if you try to go to another version that is not going to work. Operative paragraph 5 bis is not there and we asked actually for it to be dropped. We are being flexible, do not touch it. This part is better the way it is, do not take out the words "taken for the 2018 session". That is something that was already agreed on, it was there. So, for us, it is really important to keep "taken for the 2018 session" there. Now you have just dropped it in the way that you read it out. So, if you are not going to make a substantive change to it, it is better to leave it the way it is or drop it. I think that those are now the concerns: if you keep playing with that, you can reopen issues that were already in a way dealt with in previous versions.

The President: What if we say: "This decision is taken for the 2018 session, without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament". That keeps your "2018" and it also gives the possibility that it can be continued.

The Ambassador of China please.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, I think that you have already found the magic bullet. That is it.

The President: This is how it would read, which I think takes on the concern of Iran and also of Mexico: "This decision is taken for the 2018 session, without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament." So it does not prejudice the Conference from continuing this mandate next year, if it so decides, as per the rules of procedure. Is that acceptable? All right, I think we have addressed all the concerns. Has the secretariat taken note of that point? Can I have the amendments?

Now, let me go through all the amendments which we have made and I am sorry that we have had a little going back and forth, but I think that, at the end of the day, we started trying to carry everybody and get a consensus and if that has taken time and some difficulty, I appreciate everyone bearing with it. Let me go from the beginning.

On the first page, we deleted … The President has lost his board. Either I have to get it done faster or I had better go. Time is up.

All right, what we did is on the "Without prejudice" paragraph, we have taken out "and negotiations" (this is in document CD/WP.605/Rev.2). Then, in the "Cognizant of the complex nature" paragraph, we have stopped at "perspectives thereon" and taken out "including on the levels of maturity of their consideration".

I see the delegation of China.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): I think that maybe we need the word "and" after the word "purview" instead of a comma. So it would read: "Cognizant of the complex nature of the issues under its purview". Here we have a comma that we will replace with "and". So, it would read "and the wider range of perspectives thereon", in accordance with my non-native English. I do not know if it is correct or not.

The President: Mine is non-native English, as well, but I think you are right. Can the native English speakers correct us if there is a problem? All right, so the word "and" is included there. Then, in operative paragraph 1, the last sentence would read: "In their work, the subsidiary bodies would pursue the following areas and any other areas agreed by the subsidiary bodies, in accordance with the rules of procedure."

Then we go into operative paragraph 1 (b), where we deleted "gradually" from "gradually broadening". Then, in operative paragraph 3, what we finally have is: "The subsidiary bodies shall meet in accordance with paragraph 24 of the rules of procedure and shall conduct their work in accordance with paragraph 18 of the rules of procedure, with even allocation of time." Finally, in operative paragraph 6, what we have is: "This decision is taken for the 2018 session, without prejudice to any subsequent decision at the beginning of the next annual sessions of the Conference on Disarmament."

I see no requests for the floor. I take it that document CD/WP.605/Rev.2 as orally revised, as amended, is adopted.

The delegation of Mexico wishes to have the floor.

Ms. Ramírez Valenzuela (Mexico): Mr. President, my delegation just wants to thank you for all the effort that you have made until this time to include our proposals. We know that not all of our proposals and amendments are there, but we do understand that this solution in a way reflects the best possible compromise solution in this regard, even when there is still some doubt about the utility of the establishment of these subsidiary bodies, the way that they are, and particularly with these points of whether they are going to work in a formal or informal way. We are hoping for it to be formal, so there is a record of it, by the way. Because of this, we are really just looking forward to it. We are going to work in the best spirit to try to make this a success and we will actually judge the utility of it after we finish our work in order to give it a fair trial during this year.

The President: I thank the delegation of Mexico. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor before I conclude business?

The delegation of China would like to take the floor.

Mr. Ji Haojun (China): Mr. President, first of all, just very briefly I would like to thank you for all you have done and I thank everyone who has shown flexibility so that I can enjoy one or two hours of holiday today. Secondly, this decision has been taken without interpretation and this is not a formal session, as I understand. I hope it does not constitute a precedent for the future.

The President: It is a formal session, my dear colleague. We did not have interpretation, but we did not go into informal mode. So it is a formal session.

Well, Excellencies and dear colleagues, this is an important moment in our collective efforts to bring back the Conference on Disarmament to substantive work with negotiations. I think that we have negotiated quite well on getting this document adopted. I think that shows that we are capable of it. Now we just need to extend it. The decision that you have just adopted represents a compromise between differing positions in the Conference which have for long hampered its proper functioning. I salute the flexibility and spirit of cooperation shown by all of you and it is my sincere hope that this decision represents the beginning of a new phase in the Conference that will allow us to genuinely move forward. We have grappled with certain considerations which have hampered the working of the Conference and we have tried to address them. If we have not gone down some roads, it is because we felt that those roads were roads which led us nowhere. If we have tried to open some new windows, some defined, some less defined, it is because we want to try to ensure that this Conference, guided by its rules of procedure, does not use them to inhibit itself from moving forward.

To some extent, my good friend, the Ambassador of India, might have to take back his proposal on how much you can do in four weeks; you do not need eight, if you really have the will. I feel that after working for four weeks here. I am thankful for the support I had from all delegations with very differing points of views as we came into this and sometimes there was, I know, frustration that I was giving too much time, consulting too much, listening too much, but that is the way I started and that is the way I wanted to finish this exercise. I am thankful to all the delegations who have taken it in the spirit which Sri Lanka brought to this body.

If you go back and look at the very first statement we made and where we are ending, I think there is great consistency. We took it upon ourselves, we said at the beginning that there were challenges and that there were opportunities. We have tried to overcome the challenges and to open up the opportunities. In this process, I want to especially thank the delegations that worked very closely with me based on the ideas they put forward at the very outset. That has been helpful because, at the end of the day, when there are strong views, it is those trying to reconcile these views that become the most crucial. I am very grateful to those colleagues who have supported us. I am also grateful to the colleagues who had differing views, who, notwithstanding those differing views, fully engaged with us and explained where they come from on some of those views, which made it easier to understand what the fear was, what the concern was and why the safeguards requested were needed. It was also important to understand the aspirations of those who wanted to go beyond as to what was inhibiting the process of the Conference.

So, I thank all delegations who have engaged with the presidency over these past four weeks and, in fact, I particularly want to thank the six Presidents of the current session, who have been a considerable strength to the presidency. The fact that we started together, worked together and, as the Ambassador of Sweden said the other day, they fully intend to carry forward the mandate and the work we have started, building on it, improving on it and I hope evolving a programme of work with a negotiating mandate, which is our goal.

I also want to express the gratitude of the Sri Lankan delegation to the Conference secretariat and also the other colleagues who have backed us in our work. Although the interpreters are not here, I want to thank them for the very diligent work they do, they have done during our presidency and all presidencies. I also want to thank my team which has learned and watched what the Conference has been doing. I have not been here as regularly as I have wanted to, but I have been kept well briefed on what has been happening and I am glad that in some little way we have been able to use the period of our presidency to make some advance in carrying Conference matters forward and opening up some opportunity

that could be used, if the membership decides to do so. If the same political will that was shown over the past four weeks is shown in the weeks and months to come, I think that, before long, we could actually be not just negotiating a decision, but negotiating a programme of work and, based on that, moving forward to do greater things. So, with that, I am finishing my comments.

I see that the delegation of Cuba has asked for the floor. The delegation of Cuba, please.

Ms. Pérez Álvarez (Cuba): Mr. President, I will not take time because it is Friday. We would just like to recognize the great job that you have done. You personally and also your team, and I am really proud to see women around you, assisting you, which shows that diplomacy and gender affairs are very much linked, and effective, when needed. Also, I would like to reaffirm the importance of diplomacy and multilateralism in the current international scenario, where engagement is the key word to have a consensus or understanding with the different regional groups and national interests. Finally, for Cuba it is a priority to have a programme of work with a negotiating mandate and we are willing to use multilateralism and diplomacy to be active and move forward towards the negotiation of an instrument within the Conference.

The President: I thank the delegation of Cuba and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the delegation of Sweden.

Mr. Makarowski (Sweden): Mr. President, first of all, congratulations to you and your team and congratulations to all of us in the Conference on Disarmament. For a while, it felt like we were embarking on what you might call "the road to nowhere". I am glad we did not end up nowhere. We ended up with a decision and it was the great hope of my delegation, which will take the work of the Conference on Disarmament forward. Since this is still the time, for a while, that I will speak in my national capacity, as next week my Ambassador will speak as the President, let me share some thoughts on the outcome of our deliberations and the decision we have just taken.

This is much less than we had hoped for. We believe that your original draft and the different versions were much better than what we ended up with. I fully share the sentiments expressed that the decision should take us forward. There should be an element of progress; there should be an element of continuation. We ended up without them. I think that the Ambassador of Brazil said very early on that something is better than nothing. I think we have something. We should continue with that something and this is the full intention of my delegation, as was expressed by my Ambassador the other day, to continue with this work, which we will start on Monday.

The President: I thank the delegate of Sweden for his comments and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I will be meeting with the Ambassador early next week when the consultations of the six Presidents start. Sri Lanka will be very active and supportive in those consultations, as Sweden has been in ours, as well as with those of the delegations of the Presidents to follow: Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

Now I give the floor to the delegation of Pakistan.

Mr. Andrabi (Pakistan): Mr. President, I wish to place on record our deep appreciation of the manner in which you have conducted your presidency. You spurred all of us into thinking beyond our national positions and priorities in order to find a solution that would allow the Conference to resume substantive work on all agenda items. We thank you for the extensive consultations that you undertook for the preparation of this draft decision. You managed to carefully balance all viewpoints, while avoiding red lines. Given the lack of consensus on the commencement of negotiations on any issues in the Conference, the framework proposed by you provides the next best alternative. While not an optimal solution, it meets with our approval in the given circumstances. It will allow for a substantive consideration of all agenda items to build convergence and develop a better understanding of the various perspectives.

My delegation will participate actively and constructively in the discussions that will be held under the various subsidiary bodies. We hope that all Conference members will engage with this activity and utilize it to its optimum potential. We look forward to the

appointment of the five coordinators on the basis of equal geographical representation and the elaboration of a timetable of meetings that will allocate equal time to each one of the five subsidiary bodies. I conclude by once again commending your efforts and the efforts of your delegation in bringing us to this point.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his comments. This is our last session and, as I said, I wish to thank once again, finally, all those in this room at the moment, but also all those who have engaged with us over the past four weeks. I wish you a good Friday. It is 2.10 p.m. Friday is still alive. Have a good weekend. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 20 February at 10 a.m. when you will have the first meeting under the Swedish presidency. With that, I bring this meeting to a close.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 2.15 p.m.